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THE COMBAT FOR THE FAITH.

THE FIELD-INGERSOLL-GLADSTONE CONTROVERSY.

THE REAL ISSUES.

TO ATTACK a subject having the proportions of this Discussion in the few hours and paragraphs allowed for the undertaking seems to me like bombarding the English navy with a pebble from David's sling. Proportion is no less sacred in the symposium of a modern Review than in other things, and I confess to a sense of the futility of my task which well-nigh cripples me of the muscle for it.

The first thing which impresses me in the discussion between the Presbyterian clergyman, the American infidel and the English Premier is that there has been an extraordinary waste of nerve tissue in the whole business. Controversial literature has its history, like other phases of art, and that history has taught us respect for the dignity, severity, and economy of form. These qualities are not present throughout this discussion. They are, in portions, conspicuously absent. It is a controversy of impulse rather than of systems. It has, on the whole, the character of a table-talk rather than of a debate. It lacks the forensic stateliness which belongs to a subject of ultimate importance when approached by important minds. It is needless to particularize whereabouts

in the discussion one may find the absence or presence of due intellectual dignity. Evidences of both are only too apparent. Dignity is always an argument in itself, it lends a beautiful force, like that of delicate machinery, to those perfected arguments which it weaves.

The man who keeps his temper ; who avoids invective as a distinguished American gentleman for forty years avoided audible sneezing ; who has no more taste for superficiality and sophistry than a ship-wrecked sailor for a polka ; who curbs passion into persuasions, and the license of rhetoric into the liberty of logic—such a man carries the presumption of favor for his case in so far as he is such a man ; and he ought to.

The treasure of the Christian faith is not of a kind to be borne away from us by intellectual burglary.

In the next place I am reminded of the comment made on the Concord School of Philosophy by one of the keen newspaper men who have made American wit a modern discovery. The Concord students spent their time, he said, in trying to scrute the inscrutable and poss the impossible. The controversy in which Colonel Ingersoll has been the defendant is, I venture to say, not upon his part alone, an attempt to poss the impossible. Tactically considered, the discussion has to a marked extent followed that simple military expedient known as “firing wild.” It strikes me that the chief reason for this is one for which no individual party to the encounter can be held responsible ; least of all, the distinguished statesman whose scholarship, dignity, and repose have given value to the conflict if they have not won the day.

Is not the main trouble with the discussion the absence of definition ? Really, when we come to look at it, there is no such thing postulated between the opponents. The simplest conditions of controversy are disregarded from the start. There are no common terms.

It is easy to ask, How can there be any ? What can there be ? Between a mind which finds it natural to call Heaven a poor-house and Jehovah an eternal turnkey, and the mind of a devout believer in the divine mission of Jesus Christ, where is the common term ?

True, it may be a matter of the subtlest difficulty to find one ; it may even seem to be past finding out ; but for controversial purposes it is no less necessary for that. Without it there should

be no more serious war of words urged between Christianity and the "modern improvements" in unbelief, than there could be, at a similar disadvantage, between Fichte and Schopenhauer.

Without the common terms, without the mutual definitions, without the first condition of intellectual combat—why spend powder and shot and blood? Why fight at all, to leave the field unconquered and unheld, dimmed with smoke and dust, turbulent with outcry, and piteous with tears?

It seems to me that just here lies the chief mistake of much of our present conflict between faith and skepticism. When all is said, it comes to this: We fire too much at random. We do not insist on our first premise. We spend ourselves on defective conditions. It is an age which pre-eminently requires precision of terms. It is the time of exact thought. It is the time when no defender of the Christian faith can dare, to enter a helter-skelter fight for it. It is the time of times when he owes it to that faith to demand of its foes every justice, every courtesy, every consistency which the common consent of scholarship grants to controversy in all other departments of thought. It is a time when any believer and any agnostic who choose to discuss the Christian religion must begin by postulating of something, somewhere—

"*Here* is our common ground; though it be no more than a geometrical point can cover. Stand on it. Now, where next?" Otherwise the disputants may better go play tennis, in the long run.

It is necessary to say distinctly, for the truth's sake and one's own, that no replies to the position of Colonel Ingersoll can be offered in these crowded paragraphs. All that is possible in this space is to suggest that there are a few points on which it would seem practicable to find common ground, even between minds so diversely constructed as those of the three controversialists in the recent discussion.

The historic fact of anachronism in creeds is one of these points. Creeds are always behind beliefs.

Religious progress always gets the start of the Ecclesiastical Council. The faith of one age becomes the creed of the next. The progress of truth is geologic, it is to be measured from the fossils to the forming crystal, but he is a poor student who mistakes the fossil for the crystal; as we plainly see. Anachronism in creeds is

a fact to be admitted, and to be counted upon in all discussion which finds it necessary to view truth through the lenses of ecclesiastical formulation. This fact is as simple and as inevitable as changes in orthography, etymology, philosophy, science. All other forms of truth are subject to the law of variation in progress. Religious belief is no exception. This should be postulated. It should be a common term.

It might be well, also, to urge, if one had space to be urgent, that the margin of mystery in human thought and fact is large and universal. Frederick Robertson, when asked why a benevolent God could make a world of sin and misery, replied: "He is the wisest man who answers, 'I do not know.'" The greatest scientific genius of the age, one of the greatest of all ages, has been unable to fit the missing link to the superb and convincing chain of inductive reasoning involved in the theory of evolution.

The unbeliever who does not know why the sun sets, or why his children love him, or how his heart beats, or wherefore the tide turns, may be contented to concede this common term: The larger the truth the larger the mystery.

We may be peremptory to demand of him: If you cannot tell us why the spider beneath your foot stops forever if you step on it, how can you expect us to explain the private reasons of the Almighty for his public acts?

There is one other condition of satisfactory discussion upon a topic as tremendous as that involved, which I humbly venture to suggest as worth consideration. I refer to the common ground of sufficient equipment. The scholarship of the subject is the least which we have the right to demand of a man who thrusts himself before the world as a destroyer of the dearest hope which the heart of the world contains, or which the consecrated intelligence of the world has justified. In respect to equipment, it is but fair to remind ourselves that there has been no natural selection for this encounter.

Where are the specialists of the occasion? Where are the experts in exegesis? in theology? in the most practical and renowned successes of the ministry of the living faith? Admit that Colonel Ingersoll is not alone in respect to deficiency of equipment for a debate of such lofty and such solemn character; this scarcely varies the charge, so far as his peculiar relation to the subject is concerned. A man should be well assured of what he

has in it, to start with, who knocks his head against the most valuable faith of the human race. Pungent thought he has; brilliant fancy; cogent passion; magnificent rhetoric. Logic he has not. In biblical scholarship he is a generation, at least, behind his times. He is without any which qualifies him or justifies him for his foray against the Christianity of his age.

To be a professional assassin of eternal hope, one would say, a man should know enough of his weapon to select the most recent inventions and to put himself under some cultivated training in the use of them. No one can doubt that Colonel Ingersoll is quite capable of doing both of these things. The point to be noted is, that he has not taken the trouble to do them.

But, after all "words, words, words" were said and sorrowed over, would not this remain the simplest, strongest fact in the whole matter—that the most necessary common term of all possible to religious controversy, and the one most nearly impossible to command, is the delicate and old-fashioned one of spiritual sympathy?

God is a Spirit. By Spirit He is to be apprehended. They that worship, worship in Spirit. He must be loved, to be understood. He is not so unlike other objects of affection in this, after all.

His methods are mysteries. Large love is always a mystery. Trust is a premise in the syllogism of personal belief. The severer the test of love the more precious the possession. To Christian believers God is too precious to be given up, because, in brief, the Bible is a book requiring a more scholarly, a more candid, and a more trustful interpretation than any to which the unbeliever of this discussion has had his attention drawn.

Difficulties in exegesis cannot rob us of actualities in our spiritual history. Personal dearness is our sweet and powerful *præjudicium* in God's behalf. Like all love, it is an argument. Like all experience, it teaches. Like other developments, it develops. Logically considered, the most serious difficulty with the brilliant scoffer of this conflict is, that he does not bring to it the prime condition of spiritual education which is as necessary to religious debate as syntax to a classical oration.

"Ye were dead to things ye knew not of."

Let him meet us, though afar off, in the common term of the

spiritual nature. Though he possess it only in the most rudimentary stage, let him recognize that rudiment. It would serve us well on both sides, in the long and loving effort to reach the eternal conclusion which he seeks most wisely who *wishes* to find it. It is possible, results might prove that the Atheist is not the only good father in the scheme of things. It is not impossible that even the Almighty might be found qualified to vie with him in the parental virtues. Without this simply common ground of respect for the truth in question, how can we—God teach us all!—how can we ever “reason together” of Him or His?

ELIZABETH STUART PHELPS.

THE EVOLUTION OF RELIGION.

MR. GLADSTONE recognizes that “the moral history of man, in its principal stream, has been distinctly an evolution from the first until now.” This recognition of evolution in morals should suggest that in regard to doctrine also, the other branch of religion, and therefore in regard to religion as a whole, the history of man has been from the first until now distinctly an evolution. Mr. Gladstone’s recognition of evolution in morals is in reality an admission, and entirely inconsistent (could he but see it) with the old belief which he professes still to entertain, that the moral nature of man was a definite gift, good at first but early impaired, not by a process of evolution, but as the result of the definite action of man’s first parents. The admission is doubtless just. I shall here assume it to be such, because there is no space for the adequate discussion of its validity.* And I shall further assume that the religions of all races have been evolved—not revealed in full, if revealed at all.

*A separate article would be required, or rather a series, for the discussion of the true relations of religion and science. Already in the columns of *Knowledge* I have entered on this discussion, proposing to show that the religion of each age, each race, each individual man, has ever been the outcome of such knowledge as each age, each race, each individual has possessed. So far from being the enemy of religion, science or knowledge is religion’s parent. If the offspring is defective it is because of the parent’s imperfections. If the science of to-day having advanced beyond the science of old times, can beget a purer and better religion, it must nevertheless not forget that the religions of old times were the offspring of such knowledge as men in those days thought they had. But on the other hand, it is to be remembered, that though science may seem to oppose certain religious dogmas, she has always begun by opposing the false science on which they were originally based.

I know not how the evolution of religion can be considered otherwise than in a profoundly religious spirit. The thoughtful mind must contemplate with feelings of awe man's relations with the ineffable mystery residing behind phenomena. Yet a feeling of "reverential calm" appropriate in the presence of the thoughts of this infinite mystery is not desirable when superstitious ideas about it, only respectable because of their antiquity, are in question. Nay, reverential calm in dealing with teachings about the Godhead which (fondly claiming to be based on knowledge) are in reality blasphemous, is essentially irreverent. If, for instance, Colonel Ingersoll is right in his contention that in these days when better and purer moral ideas have been evolved, the common teachings about Jehovah are an insult alike to God and man, his assaults upon those teachings, whether conducted by sarcasm, by raillery, or by earnest rebuke, are akin to that anger of which it has been said that those who are moved by it "do well to be angry."

Premising that it argues something of weakness to attack Colonel Ingersoll's zeal, *quâ* zeal, instead of considering his objections, yet his zeal has been constantly rebuked while his objections have been scarcely ever met; and I may remark that there seems to me one mistake in his attacks on the common teachings respecting Jehovah. Granting that these teachings are inconsistent with the evolved religion of to-day, granting that viewed according to the ideas of to-day alike about justice and right, mercy and loving-kindness, they are insulting to the Deity; they were, nevertheless, not foolish, nor offensive, nor wicked in the days when they were originally taught. By his unreadiness to place himself in the position of those old believers, who regarded God as a being to be propitiated like the rulers and chiefs they feared, Colonel Ingersoll gives his opponents an opportunity to divert the argument from the real issue. A deity who required the sacrifice of the innocent child of a brave man as a propitiation for the offences of others, or as a satisfaction in any way to himself, is, doubtless, a conception utterly hateful to us; nay, one which we can hardly imagine as occurring to reasonable beings. But the very fact that this conception was once general, and was held unquestioningly by the best men of those days, should lead us to be very careful how we judge by our standards of right the actions of men who were able to form no higher conception of deity. A god requiring from Jephthah his young daughter's life

is doubtless for us a monstrous conception ; believers in a personal Devil could hardly conceive a devil more evil than such a deity seems to a loving and beloved father like our earnest and warm-hearted Colonel, but to a race recognizing the god of nature as a being requiring sacrifice, and taking men's dearest and best, whether offered or not, as if loving to slay, the action of a Jephthah in offering his best and dearest (or risking so much) for the sake of his people must have seemed worthy of all praise. If we applaud the Spartan mother who was ready to see son after son fall in defense of her country and theirs, who could say to the last and dearest of them, that rather than he should fling his shield away in flight, she hoped he would be brought back upon it dead to her arms, we must in justice recognize the devotion of the warrior-judge to his people, who, to propitiate the favor of Jehovah for them, made a rash vow, and fulfilled it by the sacrifice of his only child.

Doubtless it is intensely saddening to picture a people so low in moral development as the people must have been who made it an ordinance that the sacrifice of Jephthah's daughter was to be celebrated four days in every year. One would be glad to rejoice in the non-Semitic descent of our race, were it not that we find Agamemnon similarly sacrificing Iphigenia, and kindred sacrifices recorded among our own more immediate ancestry, the Teutons and the Norsemen. We are disposed to welcome the dealers in mythic lore who tell us that Jephthah (or Yiphtâch, the *Opener*) is the sun (or *First-born*) who sacrifices his daughter (the sunset-sky) when she comes forth at dawn (as the sun-rise sky) to welcome his return after conquering his enemies—only to be slain by her father as with his advance the ruddy light of sunrise disappears. We learn gladly that another Semitic "Opener," the Libyan sun god Aptûchos, or Ἀπρουχος (we only have the Greek form), was really the same sun as Yiphtâch, or Jephthah ; and that Abraham's intended sacrifice of Isaac is only another myth, telling how Abh Râm, the *Lofty Father*, kills his son (אֶבְרָם) Yischâk, the *Laugher*, or the *Bright* (that is, how night killed its offspring, the sun) ; only, as history could not (whereas a sun-myth very well *could*) speak of the slain as restored to life, the Hebrew record, as eventually preserved for "the chosen people," pictures Isaac as saved through a vicarious sacrifice.

But we cannot escape the certain conclusion that whether they were relating historic facts or borrowing myths, the writers of the Pentateuch, Joshua and Judges, addressed a race as yet scarce emerged from savagery, and themselves accepted the hideous ideas of deity which they promulgated among their people. Though we must not call their teachings foolish or offensive or wicked for them, yet *in themselves and for us* those teachings are as hateful, as wicked, as blasphemous as they have been called (somewhat too generally) by Colonel Ingersoll. Mr. Gladstone cannot escape this by assuming an air of reverential calm. The Talmages and the Sam Joneses can no more silence the teachings of men's hearts by beating the drum-ecclesiastic than the priests who made hideous noises to dumb the cries of mothers when their first-born were immolated to Moloch could quench those mothers' tears, or by clamor still the beating of those mothers' hearts. It remains the simple fact that those to whom we owe the earliest Bible teachings about the Godhead, so far from being inspired to conceive of deity as almighty, allwise, and all-perfect, pictured a Being whose plans were constantly foiled, who was no wiser than they were themselves, and whose ways were as the ways of the worst and most brutal of the savage rulers they chiefly feared.

I can for my own part be patient with the poor savages who pictured gods savage and unreasoning as themselves; but I must confess I sympathize in my heart of hearts with Colonel Ingersoll when he loses all thought of reverential calm in contemplating the ways of men who in these days of a higher and purer morality can speak otherwise than with horror of the Being pictured as the God of Abraham, the God of Moses, and the God of Jephthah. Of what use is the evolution of morality if we are to hold by the teachings of the morality of savage times? And in what way shall men who love mercy, who as fathers seek their children's love, speak of a conception of the God which while calling Him Our Father pictures Him as mercilessly seeking His children's lives?

Where is the greater irreverence, in saying "These are God's words and therefore I will take them to heart, though they seem to present God as a terrible, nay horrible Being," or in saying, "These words picture God as cruel and unjust, therefore they *cannot* be God's words—it were blasphemy to deem them such?"

But the idea of sacrifice running through all the older among

the Jewish books included in the Old Testament—seen equally in the reproduction or adoption of mythical stories, in the ceremonial law, and in the laws for the punishment of Sabbath breaking and so forth, shows us what was the real origin of the Jewish religion in which this idea of sacrifice remained always important and became eventually predominant. Nature-worship, that is the worship of powers supposed to be present in natural phenomena—in storm and tempest, earthquake, flood, and fire, in sea and land, in mountain and river, and later in sun and moon and stars, has always involved sacrifices intended either to please or to propitiate the gods of nature. In the Jewish stories of sacrifice we have the idea of the sun god's sacrifice of his own offspring, which seemed to teach that by sacrifice alone, and by sacrifice of the best and purest and most innocent, could deity be kept kindly disposed towards man, or be appeased when He had been offended. In the Jewish ceremonial we find the sacrifices to the evening and morning sun (propitiation to insure his return, and thanksgiving because he had returned), sacrifices to the returned moon, sacrifices with feasting and joy in honor of the year-god's passover or crossing of the equator on his way towards his full glory in the mid-summer skies, sacrifices with fasting and sorrow for the year-god's approach to his descending passage of the equator on his way towards the cold and gloom of winter. In the laws for the punishment of those who failed to keep the sabbaths and new moons, the passover and the atonement, we find evidence of what has ever lain close by the root of all formal religion, and of all forms of religious intolerance, the fear lest the gods of nature worshiped and propitiated of old without doubt or hesitation should be offended by the misdoing of a few, or even but of one among the people and should therefore wreak vengeance (so disrespectfully did men then think of deity) on the whole race to which that one offender (or those few) belonged.

Within the limits of the Old Testament, however, we recognize the evolution of man's moral nature. We have but to compare the teaching of the first and greater Isaiah (chapters i. to xxxix.), with the teaching found in any book or any chapter, from the opening of Genesis to the end of Chronicles, to recognize the development of a morality so much higher and so much purer, the recognition of a deity so much worthier of love and reverence, that we might imagine we had lit upon a preacher of a

different race, a race as far in advance of the Israelitish race of old as the Caucasian is in advance of the Papuans of to-day. "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me," saith the Lord; . . . "I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, . . . your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. . . . Put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment (justice), relieve the oppressed, judge (seek justice for) the fatherless, plead for the widow." Here is religion that appeals to the heart of man, teaching good and not evil, approving the merciful, and rebuking—even as the tender-hearted Ingersoll rebukes "them that call evil good and good evil, that put darkness for light and light for darkness, that put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter," and so onwards, almost without a break to the end of the Hebrew Bible: "The Lord hath shown thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

But the idea of sacrifice (and especially of the sacrifice of innocent blood) as pleasing to God returned upon man in the later evolution of religion. For evolution tends not always towards advance. There was no Isaiah, or Amos, or Micah to preach more worthily of deity when the early Christians—somewhere about the end of the first century—began to load the religion, whose essential principles should be those taught in the Sermon on the Mount, with the old sacrificial doctrines, passing back even beyond the sacrificial teachings of the early Hebrews to the system originally belonging to sun worship. Whatever view men choose to take respecting the absolute parallelism between the doctrines and ceremonial of Christianity and the doctrines and ceremonial of ancient sun worship (a parallelism so striking that the Emperor Hadrian, in a letter written 137 A. D., described Christianity as the worship of Serapis)—whether we attribute it to the desire of the early Christians to harmonize their doctrines with those of surrounding nations, or regard it as an attempt at symbolism, or as indicating in the doctrines of sun worshipers a miraculous foreshadowing of the "Scheme of Redemption," or lastly take the simpler view which I have elsewhere advocated, the parallelism is there, perfect in every detail. The annual history of sun god as watched

from the Pyramid observatory temples, is followed (in every detail) in those parts of the Ebionite gospel (Matthew), which even the Ebionites themselves rejected as mythical. Not more exactly was the ceremonial system of Serapis followed (to the bewilderment of Hadrian) by the Christians of Alexandria in the second century of the Christian era.

It is to this idea of a sacrifice-loving God that the failure of the tender and merciful teachings of Christianity to bring mercy and peace into the world must be chiefly attributed. It was "prophecy after the event" which caused an early Christian writer to put into the mouth of the Teacher of Peace the hard saying (which moves Col. Ingersoll to just warmth of indignation), "I came not to bring peace, but a sword into the world." The "Logia" of Matthew (much older than the rest of the gospel) show that the true Christian doctrine taught peace and self-sacrifice, love and mercy. We may be certain that the same lips did not say, "Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you *rest*," and "I came not to send peace, but a sword."

The process of evolution in religion is yet once more tending in these days, as in the days of the greater Isaiah, to bring unworthy ideas respecting deity into disfavor among men of just and merciful minds. But we must not expect "reverential calm" in such men. How can they be calm with what moves them to just wrath? How can they be reverential in the presence of what seems to them unworthy of reverence—worthy of the opposite of reverence? Did Isaiah treat the formal religion, the sacrificial system, and the insult to deity underlying it, with reverential calm? Nay, but he pictured the Lord Himself as full of anger, because "evil was called good, and good evil," and because justice and mercy and loving-kindness, replaced by ceremonial observances which were "an abomination unto Him." "'I will turn my hand upon thee,' saith the Lord, 'and thoroughly purge away thy dross, and will take away all thine alloy.'"

Colonel Ingersoll may have somewhat overlooked the pure metal in Bible teachings and in the Christian religion; but it has been the dross he has striven with zeal and earnestness (by no means with inappropriately reverential calm) to purge away, the worthless alloys he has endeavored to burn out with the fire of his fervid words.

The time will come when the teachings, which seem to Mr. Gladstone wanting in reverence, will be more justly valued. Hypocrisies and cruelties, which are now regarded as the expression of religious fervor, will be seen in their true light, and utterances warm from a tender and generous heart against the cruelty and intolerance born of superstition, will be seen to be the expression of the truest reverence, to teach the worthiest religion of which man is capable. For that "pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father," which was taught in the first days of Christianity, was no other than what had been taught by Isaiah; nor can man advance beyond it. Should that religion ever be accepted by mankind generally the evolution of religion will have done its full work and reached its highest development.

RICHARD A. PROCTOR.

THE BIBLE IN THE CONTROVERSY.

THE story is told of Dr. James Freeman, minister for many years of Kings Chapel, in Boston, that, when a lady said to him once, Is it not a dreadful thing, sir, that this Abner Kneeland, the atheist, should go about the country lecturing as he does? Freeman answered promptly, No, madam; I think it is a good thing; and then went on to cite facts and instances in proof of his own conclusion; that the arguments made in support of atheism had always brought out so many new arguments on the other side, the side of faith, as to leave religion on a higher and more impregnable basis than it was before.

And I love to believe that this will be the final issue of the conflict started afresh in these times by our sturdy idoloclast from Illinois and transferred just now from the platform to the pages of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, where one feels bound to say it has been held so high above the usual level of such conflicts by the men on both sides—or shall we say at the three angles—and so free from all clamor and evil speaking, that I am reminded of a very noble saying of Lord Falkland, as I read what has been written so far, "I have always thought there should be as little bitterness in religious controversy as there is in a love letter, and that the contrary way is as void of Christian charity as it is of human wisdom."

Bishop Wilberforce said once, "I have often heard about the milk of human kindness, but I was never able to identify the cow until I knew Jacobson." And I think of that saying also as I read these letters and papers, but with this distinction, that one could not have imagined it would flow forth at such a time and from the breasts of men engaged in such a battle; yet here is the milk of human kindness pouring in gentle and wholesome streams, and so one has to say that if no other worth should be found in the debate opened by Dr. Field, we may surely be glad for this : that we have seen how men standing so far apart in opinion and conviction have been able to write what one may fairly call *love letters* in religious controversy.

It is in this spirit I would try to say some word, by the editor's invitation, touching the conclusion of the whole matter so far, and will lose no time in saying I would like to touch the Bible for my theme, because, as it seems to me, this is the centre on which the questions in debate turn and return, each man resting his arguments in affirmation or denial so entirely on the book, by reason of Dr. Field's first letter, that we have to see at once if it could be taken out there would be no debate worth the name between these frank and free-spoken champions of religion on the one side, and infidelity—so-called—on the other.

And I would fain range myself also, so far as one may honestly do this who is compelled to believe as I do, on the side of the men who maintain the divine inspiration and authority of the Bible, because I accept this doctrine within what I take to be its true limitations, and gladly say with Carlyle, It is "the one book wherein for thousands of years the spirit of man has found light and nourishment, and a response to whatever was deepest in his heart;" and with another, that, "In all the world there is no such book beside, for the cottage window or the statesman's closet, the poet's instance or the orator's pattern, or the help of a man, or the inspiration of a race." It is related of George Peabody that when he was quite an old man, sitting in his office one day in London, a boy brought him a new testament for some purpose, I know not what; but the old man looking up, said: "My boy, you carry that book easily in your youth, but when you are as old as I am it must carry you." I have to confess to some such feeling in my own life, weighted now with many years. It is told of Dr. Adam Clarke also, that while he was writing his great and

curious commentary on the Bible his table was loaded and cumbered with the books he must use ; but when his work was done, these were all cleared away except one book, and then he said to his son : "See, my lad, the books are all done with and put away, and only the old Bible is left."

I can easily understand the old man's thought and feeling that this was more to him than the whole wealth of learning and inspiration beside, the old Bible, just as Shakespeare is more to what Mr. Gladstone rather daintily calls "The Reply" than any other man, and his book "the noblest ever written with a pen." It has been well said, indeed, that the man who knows no book but his Bible does not know his Bible ; still no such thought can touch us when we look toward the grand old Methodist, or toward these defenders of the faith whose work is now in our hands. They are all men of many books, but this is to them just as it stands, *The Word of God*, the one book of a divine inspiration and authority, *The Bible*, and no doubt they will say with Milton, "There are no songs to be compared with the songs of Zion, no orations equal to those of the prophets, and no politics equal to those the Scriptures can teach us."

Nor can I think it is a fair argument against the ingrain worth of the book, as this must be touched for a moment apart from the question of its plenary inspiration and authority, that men should misuse it as they have done so often, any more than it is a fair argument against the ingrain worth of good corn or wheat that so much of it should be turned into whiskey. We have drawn from it the power to save men and to slay them, to establish peace and to mass artillery, and to be Christians of the noblest type and bigots of the direst. It is the text-book alike of your iron-clad Calvinism and your sunny and most generous Universalism, and the volume in which the Quaker finds food for his quietness, and your Millerite of all brands for his craze. It was the corner-stone of the great Puritan foundation which underlies our nation's life, it was also the book from which the Puritan drew his infernal power to hang the Quakers, whip and banish the Baptists, and to burn the witches, while the advocates of human slavery in the times I easily remember found proof in it to show that slavery was a divine institution, and men like Garrison that it was accursed of God and man. Always in the Bible we may find this power for good and evil, the inspiration of life unto life

and of death unto death, the light of heaven and the smoke of hell.

And when we look for the reason why men should touch these wide extremes of good and evil, and find their inspiration for them in the self same book, it seems clear to me again that this must be the main reason, and it may be the only one, that we do not go to the Bible so much for what we should find in it as for what we want to find either as sects or as men. The appetite is in us, and we want what will satisfy the appetite. We have got our question all ready, and we go to the Bible for our answer, while so vast and variant is the store of things we can find in the wonderful old book that it shall go very hard with us if we do not come soon or late on exactly what we look for. And so for this reason it is as wings to the spirit of one man, and as lead to that of another, and brings sight or begets blindness, makes melody or creates discord, and is sweet to us as milk and honey, or sour as unsunned crabs, in answer to this law—shall we call it of selection?—and I have never yet met the man whose instinct did not answer to this law. The moment we come to the book for more than the mere reading we begin to show our limitations, and I do not hesitate to say the man was never born of woman who could find what Calvin and Channing found in the self same volume, and make the things chime, or inwardly digest them so that they should bring forth the good fruits of the spirit.

And it is here, as I am compelled to believe, that we find the main reason for the evil and ugly things we must all deplore and condemn as ruthlessly as our sturdy idoloclast knows how to condemn them. The fine wheat of it even has been turned into a sour mash, if I may return to my figure, and so distilled through the twisted worm of bigotry and intolerance that men have become drunk thereby, and insane, and then the things have been done in the name of God and the Holy Book which are the disgrace and shame of Christendom as well as the mother milk very often on which such men as our honest Atheist have been nursed forth to what they were. And so touching the question as it stands, so far, between these frank and sincere men who affirm on the one side that the Bible is the word of God to man, perfect and entire, and on the other reject such a claim with scorn and contempt, and trying, I trust, with an equal sincerity to see where the truth lies among them, is it not fair to say that this can never

be a divine book to those who make only an infernal use of it, or the word of God to those who only find their inspiration in it to do the work of devils. Also, as we find the instinct everywhere to take only what suits us and leave all the rest, must we not say the man then, after all, is greater than the book, no matter who may say the book is greater than the man, this being divine, as they hold, while we are only human.

Is it not fair to ask the defenders of the book which I also love and reverence, whether we may not use our reason when we read it as we use it when we read any book of a great and vital moment; and as we use our instinct, to take only what suits us really and truly, and to leave the rest because, as Butler well says, "Reason is the only faculty we have to judge concerning any thing, even revelation itself," and Locke: "He that takes away reason to make way for revelation, puts out the light of both." And as the truth is forever growing larger and clearer, as we claim, on all sides, in science, in philosophy, in history and life, so that many things once accepted as pure truth are now quite incredible, have we not the right to claim that this law of progress should touch the Bible as it touches all things beside, and the truth we shall draw from its inexhaustible pages. Moreover, as we read by the ever-growing light of our time and the fair light of reason also, may it not grow clear to us that this great old book is not something sealed and settled and then locked up in the dogma of a plenary inspiration, once for all, which is something the book itself never claims? If I have read it to any purpose I am compelled to believe that the book itself makes on this side and loses on that, while it still remains *The Bible*—just as in my mother land and within the lines of authentic history, there were towns standing where you can now sail in pretty deep waters, and a way for ships on the sea where there is good land now covered with thorpes and farms; yet, it is still old England.

The Apostles, for instance, evidently believed in the almost instant return of their great and dear friend to the earth, when the dead in Christ should rise first, and those who were alive and remained would meet the Lord in the air; but we see now they were utterly mistaken, and the expectation has sunk out of sight, save as a periodical craze. They believed also in the resurrection of this body from the grave

at the last day, and every time our good advocate across the water recites his creed, he says, I believe in the resurrection of the body. It is none of my business to ask what meaning he gives to the sentence. I can only say that for myself the evident faith of the Apostles is simply incredible, I can only believe that these bodies of ours wait not a moment for the call of the angels of the great resurrection. It is rising now, in this June splendor, the dust of the dear sacred dead, and by October some sweet and holy essence from it will have been hidden in the flowers, the fruits, and the corn. My dear friend and brother, Dr. Field, has no doubt found poor remnants of them in the caves by the Nile. They were laid there at endless cost and pains by the heathen, as we call them, who also believed in this resurrection, that so they might be ready when the call came sounding through the valley, and the rocks would rend to let them come forth. They burn them for fuel now, as I hear, in the fires; and I think as I read that, there must be a dim, dumb joy in them to be so disimprisoned at last, and be free to be one again with the beautiful living world. These are but the instances of the truth which touches me always as I read my New Testament, of the way it may make and lose, and how we must verify and rectify the truths we find here; winnow the grain and let the chaff burn or rot, as it pleases the Creator of the grain and the chaff.

But if I must use such reason as I have again as the twin sister of such faith as I have, I find I must reject some things I find in my Bible as what we used to call "Bible true" and written by a divine inspiration or done by it, as heartily as Mr. Ingersoll rejects them. Some he has quoted in his rejoinder. I will quote some more. The book makes the walls of a city fall down flat at the noise of a great shouting and the blowing of rams' horns; and says the sun stood still on Gibeon and the moon on the valley of Ajalon until the people had avenged themselves of their enemies, and hasted not to go down a whole day, so that there was not a day like that before or after it; and makes Deborah bless Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, and tip, with a divine approval, the nail she drives into the temple of her sleeping and trusting guest. Now if we found things like these wonders written a great while ago in, let us say, Hindostan, we should say at once they were myths and legends; and of such treachery done in the name of their God, What a deity! I have no option about saying just

the same thing when I read these chapters in my Bible. They may be myths, legends, poems, whatever you will; but they are no word of God to me or true word about Him. So, because I must be true to my own soul, I have to say if those walls went down at all it must have been by good solid pounding; and the courses the steadfast sun and moon keep now they kept then, while barbarian fought barbarian; and it was by no divine inspiration the woman drove that nail into the man's temple after she had given him that bowl of bread and milk, but by the inspiration of a very evil spirit of treachery and revenge. They might believe it who made the record, I will not; and since then all Christendom might believe it, I will not; and Newton might believe what they say about the sun and moon as a Christian, and doubt it as a philosopher, then I stand with the philosopher against the Christian. I say amen also to the things Mr. Ingersoll quotes for ruthless condemnation touching this whole business in the old fighting books. It was noticed when the missionaries had got hold of some New Zealanders, and were teaching them from the Bible, that they preferred these fighting books above all others, and would fain have had the holy men read from them all the time. And I have read how a good bishop, who "did a great work" among the Goths in his time, undertook to translate the Bible for them, but would not translate these books at all, because, as he told them, they were over-fond of fighting already. When they were holding a debate over them and their like in Concord many years ago, and Master Rogers asked his antagonist, point blank, whether he would slay innocent women and children then at the command of his god, and the man said: "Yes, I would," Rogers answered very quietly. "Well, I wouldn't, and there's where we differ."

Such things are but the instances of the cleft between those who still love the Bible and find in it a divine inspiration and those who say it is all divine and must be accepted without question, and, as near as may be, without debate. It cannot be so accepted in our time. We must bring the Bible to the truth, and not the truth to the Bible, and having long done with the worship of golden idols—so we say—we must not now worship a verbal one. The fine wheat is there, so is the chaff; the fair flowers, so are the weeds; the pure gold, so is the dross and refuse and the slag of holy and unholy fires long burnt out; and we must weigh

these things at their true worth and call them by their right names, no matter who gets hurt. Prove all things and hold fast that which is good, as honest old Paul says—as fine a bit of manhood as ever breathed the breath of life. “The truth should be no less than the *Gospel* of God, presented under a living form so human and so gentle that, being accepted by all, it may rouse the souls of all to a community of thought.”* I know of no other way to win or silence men like our honest Atheist, or to “leave religion on a higher and more impregnable basis than it was before.” Some years ago, I was riding across the prairies with a missionary who had newly come home from Egypt, where he had been eleven years, and talking of many things, I said to him, “Tell me truly who was the very best man you found there.” “My Mahomedan teacher of Arabic,” he answered at once; “he was the noblest and best man I found in the valley.” “Then what will become of him,” I said again, “if he dies in that faith,” and his answer was, “He will go to hell, sir, because he would not accept the terms of salvation laid down in the Bible.” So say those who sent him out. How mean and vile such dogmas are in contrast with the saying of Achmet the Turk to John Tempest of Broughton: “Religion is that manner of serving one and the same God which suits the constitution of each respective country.”† And when we blazon such things as my missionary said to me on our banners and fall back on our Bible to maintain them, yes, and give them to our children for “the sincere milk of the Word,” what wonder that a man so wholly human and tender as our friend should say if that is your God and this your Bible I will fight them both to the bitter end.

ROBERT COLLYER.

THE VINDICATION OF JEHOVAH.

I HAVE followed the Field-Ingersoll and the Gladstone-Ingersoll controversy with exceeding interest, not unmingled with quiet merriment evoked by the serio comic gravity with which the gallant Colonel gets in his favorites heaves and stabs at the fictions of his own creation, while he loudly declares them to be the figments of religion. Who was the genius who compiled an

* *Conversations of Rabelais in the Life of Stephen Dolet.*

† Reported in Whitaker's *History of Craven.*

essay to prove the non-existence of Napoleon I. ? I could well fancy the mantle of his painstaking audacity enwrapping the shoulders of this sturdy Paynim-knight, a most genial and cultured gentleman as all have it, and whose sweet and reverent home-life has been repeatedly described to me by those privileged to witness it. In these most sacred relations of our existence, by the unconscious growth of heredity and the unknown absorption of custom and habit of thought, Colonel Ingersoll is intensely religious in spite of himself. But all well-founded reverence for him who thus practices better than he preaches must never relax the sinews of one who is called upon to parry to the best of his poor ability the thrusts of "that other man over yonder," the blustering and audacious writer who likewise bears the honored name of Colonel Ingersoll. Therefore I, too, who would be well content to practice only what I preach, must close my visor and put forth my shield, and present my buckler for the weight of the quasi-wrathful arm that is wildly flourishing the blade of trenchant and ready wit in the pages of the NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW.

Basing, as I do, upon the Bible only (with a big B, Colonel; decades of centuries entitle it to that), by which term we Hebrews mean only what is commonly known as the "Old Testament," I do not feel authorized to discuss any of the magnificent feints and terrifying slashes made at doctrines or principles specifically Christian. What Colonel Ingersoll attacks herein has no authoritative existence for us whatever. Pauline Christianity, *i. e.*, the Christianity of fact as opposed to that of theory, is *eo ipso* anti-Jewish; and, for the matter of that, could readily be shown to be antagonistic, too, to the teachings of that pious Essene Hebrew of Nazareth, whom posterity has elevated to the dignity of founder of a world-religion and made the recipient of divine honors. Attacks concern Hebrews which are directed against Jewish teachings; some of these only, appearing in Colonel Ingersoll's latest utterance, shall I consider.

I have heard that many men seek refreshing relaxation from the toil of business or the cares of professional life by the vigorous exercise of muscle and sinew in the science of the fencer or the boxer. Some such motive seems to me to dominate Colonel Ingersoll, who, however, endowed with more than the average intellectuality, prefers to be intellectual even in his relaxation, and so fences and boxes, as it were, with a pen, upon paper, and

with the loftiest and most powerful opponents he can find. Nay, he has been publicly accused of mounting a wild broncho, and, throwing the rein upon his neck, of galloping and cavorting in a most reckless and defiant manner in a tilt around the stately figure of reverent Religion, mounted upon the charger Revelation. All the aforesaid exercises are good as relaxation, if the exerciser can stand them, and provided, moreover, that he is thoroughly skilled in the use of the foil, the gloves, or the saddle and stirrup. But if not—look out for disaster. Now, while cheerfully according Colonel Ingersoll any or all of these favorite relaxations, if they do him good or even if he only thinks so, I desire to call attention to several errors he is constantly making in matters which I have come to study a little, matters in which my people have for many centuries preserved with unpatterned devotion a certain measure of knowledge or explanation. It is in ignorance of these things that the Colonel's rapier scores vainly on parts altogether invulnerable, that his gloves smite the air, that his antic-pony sadly springs a joint. Let us see some things the Colonel does not know.

He says, for instance, that "God and Elijah" are strongly to be censured for mocking (*sic*) the God of the priests of Baal, and to severest condemnation for slaying them presently on the banks of the Kishon. I cannot understand the disgust with which a Colonel Ingersoll assails the gaunt prophet for mocking the religious beliefs of another, when I call to mind certain peccadillos of his in that direction, unless, indeed, the Colonel count his own offenses as trivial in this age of enlightened *liberality*, by the side of Elijah's offense, in time of keenest struggle, a struggle for very life and death waged by the almost extinguished theocracy against the inroads of a life-sapping, morality-destroying, Phœnician idolatry boasting an unscrupulous protectress upon the royal throne. Surely, under such circumstances, a little gentle mockery did no particular harm. Yes, but murder—? that slaughter at the brook afterwards? Well, not alone does the Colonel not know that the Word directly states that *Elijah* was the author of the massacre, not God, but the very next chapter, the vision on Horeb, gives Elijah a severe reproof from the Almighty for that very bloody act, a crushing reproof to such a high-strung nature as that of the fiery Tishbite, together with what is tantamount to his dismissal from active office, and the caution to all that the

Truth is to be preached, not by fire or hill-upturning earthquake, not by hurricane-like zeal or the storm-wind of impetuous force, but by "the still, the small voice" of kindly persuasion and affectionate instruction. So that it *does* appear that mercy and judgment met together, righteousness and peace kissed, even in this episode of Elijah, if the Colonel would only read it to the end.

Another thing the Colonel does not know, when he speaks of God as malevolent, anent the 28th chapter of Deuteronomy and the so-called "curses" therein contained, is that they are prophecy, not imprecation, prediction, not malediction. The disasters there described are the legitimate and necessary results of all those immoral and obscene practices, which constituted the heathen's idolatry, and contain no more a curse than the words of one who should warn his child that plunging his hand into hot embers will cause suffering and death. Forewarning is forearming, the proverb says; he who foretells the inevitable evil results of evil choice does not cause those results, but rather he who thus forewarned, nevertheless braves them. In conclusion, I would point out to Colonel Ingersoll that the very "curse" (he calls it), or prediction, he quotes concerning the woman feasting on her babe actually came to pass in the terrible straits of the siege of Jerusalem by the Romans, as he may read in Josephus.

The Colonel does not know (or he would admit) the anti-idolatrous, *i. e.* the anti-obscene, animus of the Egyptian plagues, when he scornfully asks, "how did God treat the animals in Egypt?" May I point out to him that it was not "the patient ox," "the loving dog," which felt the sword of Adonai's power, to teach Israel the falsity of Egyptian dogmas, but the as Apis and Mnevis revered ox and the dog-god of Cynopolis who were thereby hurled from their thrones in men's minds, and with them the belief in their corresponding impurities of worship.

The Colonel does not know (or he would not have stated the opposite) that God did not establish a religion in which every temple was a slaughter house and every officiating priest a butcher. I believe that Judaism is not yet extinct, and methinks many a Jewish temple exists where cattle are not slaughtered and many a rabbi who is not a butcher for the altar. From my more intimate acquaintance with my people, I may say that it would trouble the Colonel sorely to find a single temple Jewish to-day where sacrifices *are* in existence. We *had* them in a former period of

our history, about the time when the Colonel's ancestors clothed themselves (mainly) in woad-dye, and worshiped the mistletoe, with human holocausts. Yet I would not for a moment reproach Colonel Ingersoll with such sanguinary ideas of religious necessities, nor accuse him of deep reverence for that curious parasite plant, unless indeed it have been in the days of his youth and under the chandeliers at Christmastide. It may be, however, that the Colonel is under that common delusion that the "sacrifices" of the Pentateuch were "established" by God for Israel. He says so. This is erroneous; for sacrifices existed in all time from the day when the first men brought of their primeval possessions "an offering to the Lord." The Israelites had seen sacrifices galore in Egypt before they received God's revelation; no need to "establish" them. In infinite condescension to human ideas, and human infirmity, the Almighty permitted sacrifices (of certain animals only) to be continued for a period of our historical development, until loftier ideas and modes of worship should prevail,* to satisfy the inherited, aboriginal craving for visible approach to God with an offering as a present.

Mr. Ingersoll does not seem to know, in the next place, the practical import of the 13th of Deuteronomy, commanding the denunciation of the seducer to idolatry, even were it the lips of wife or brother that framed the specious arguments. He does not seem at all to comprehend what idolatry was in Moses' time. Idolatry was human sacrifice, nay, child-burning (Lev. xviii. 21); it was bestiality (Lev. xvii. 22, 24, xx. 23). It was sin so gross and so revolting that the land was described as spewing idolators forth (Lev. xviii. 25, 28). No alliance could be permitted with idolators, by reason of their utter corruption; note the disastrous results of enticement planned by Balaam, according to Jewish tradition, resultant upon a short intercourse with Moab (Num. xxv. 1). For Israelites not only to become enticed by such immoralities, but to become the enticers of husbands, brothers, others, would have been inconsistent with the selection of the "kingdom of priests, the holy nation," the preachers of a purer code. Therefore was this command issued, altogether minatory and preventive; for our annals record no single instance of its fulfillment. It

*If the founders of that woful doctrine of the Atonement for mankind by vicarious sacrifice had correctly appreciated the transitional and intermediary function of the sacrifices permitted to Israel they would have escaped the sarcasm Colonel Ingersoll lavishes upon them.

served its purpose; here again there is the mercy which the Colonel does not see because he has not studied sufficiently. And when he continues with the assertion that "God did not tell the husband to reason with his wife: she was to be answered only with death: she was to be bruised and mangled to a bleeding, shapeless mass of quivering flesh for having breathed an honest (?) thought," the Colonel betrays, with all these cheap heroics, a lamentable ignorance of the slow, stately and merciful course of judicial procedure which obtained among the Hebrews. The Talmudical treatise Sanhedrin is full of instruction for him on this head.

He is equally unfortunate in speaking of the God who "established" slavery, and by a curious chance, contrasts thereby the "effrontery" of the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal." As it happens, although, of course, the Colonel does not know it, that species of theft, the theft of human rights we denominate slavery, is precisely the primary objective point of that commandment, as any Jewish scholar could have told him; that theft being the only one, according to Jewish jurisprudence punishable, like infringements of the other articles of the Decalogue, with death (vide the very next chapter, Exod. xxi. 16). As regards Israelites, bondmen* were forbidden; "for My servants are they, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt: they shall not be sold as bondmen are sold (Lev. xxv. 42). Thus, then God did not "establish" slavery among His chosen people. But among the nations round about, among whom the sale of men for service was custom, established probably from the first war ever waged, bondage had to be recognized, for it existed; and he who has ever read, as Mr. Ingersoll has evidently not, the numerous and extremely merciful laws touching the treatment by Hebrews of these dependents, recommending them constantly as recipients of kindness, forethought and benevolence, "for bondmen were ye in the land of Egypt," must thank God for the introduction of such noble and altogether unusual sentiment in the treatment of the serfs and pariahs of ancient society.

In conclusion, the Colonel breaks a lance for those poor Canaanitish tribes, championed by him of old, and vehemently asks why God did not give them the "Ten Commandments." "Why did He shower all the blessings of revelation on one poor and

* The Hebrew language has no word for "slave" the bondman was a "servant," a "laborer."

wretched tribe and leave the great world in ignorance and crime?" It will, I am sure, delight the gallant gentleman to know that this question was asked centuries ago by Jewish sages, and solved by the investigation of the murderous propensities of the one tribe, the kleptomaniac weakness of an Amalek, the moral turpitude of incest-springing Moab and Ammon, *et hoc genus omne*, none of whom could with satisfactory consistency receive the Decalogue's stringent provisions in certain regards. It was "only a poor and wretched tribe" (we are not ashamed of our ancestors, Colonel; they very much antedated yours in the arts of clothing and general civilization)—it was only this poor and wretched tribe of serfs could be found, not living by murder and rapine, not supporting themselves by violence or pillage, but by rigorous hard labor, and capable withal of honoring both the parental and marital relationships. This poor and wretched tribe received those and other teachings of which you know nothing, right faithfully has it conserved them both by precept and example, for all the world's adoption, and therewith has it justified the wisdom of God's selection of a serf-band.

I would I had the time to follow Mr. Ingersoll whither he leads next, to the consideration of Abraham and Jephthah. I could show, I believe, evidence of what I have hitherto submitted, that the Colonel's shafts are feathered by imperfect knowledge, and wobble hopelessly wide of the mark; that his attacks are often against invulnerable positions of which he does not seem aware; that if he knew more of that which he discusses he would spare his strength. He must study the Bible by the light of the exposition of those who brought it into the heathen world; he must sit for awhile at the feet of Jewish instruction in Jewish matters as did he of Tarsus; and then he may venture to form opinions on Hebrew teachings and Biblical traditions. And if he shall do this, his pen will trace other things, in his moments of relaxation, than scorn and invective for men's most precious literary possessions; from a mind so prolific and so cultivated, "in the stead of the thornbush there shall come up the cedar, and in the place of the nettle there shall spring up the myrtle, to the glory and the name of God." And as we all recognize this, let me in parting with the fight-loving knight of this tilt, draw his attention to the fact that the horse ridden by Religion "in deep and reverential calm," is not therefore *dead* because he takes no

notice of that bucking, saltatory, and generally amusing little broncho the Colonel rides ; he is not dead, he slyly winks.

F. DE SOLA MENDES.

THE COMBATANTS.

BAYARD, Sir Philip Sydney, nor El Cid ever entered the lists against a foe with more chivalrous courtesies than the three gentlemen who have just closed their tournament. If there were nothing else noteworthy in this clash of conflicting opinions on the most vital of all subjects, the formal and graceful salutes which each combatant executes in honor of his adversary before proceeding to demonstrate the fallacy and wickedness of that adversary's cause, must command admiration and perhaps suggest surprise in view of its novelty on such an occasion. To Dr. Field belongs the credit of pitching the discussion in a key of mutual admiration, and, if I may say so, somewhat gushing regard. The joy that fills him in contemplating the fact that he is acquainted with Col. Ingersoll breaks out in the opening paragraph of his opening paper. "Dear Sir, I am glad that I know you," he exclaims before proceeding to the immediate business before him, and follows up this complimentary ejaculation by the statement that some of his, the Doctor's, brethren look upon him, the Colonel, as a monster because of his unbelief. It is needless to call attention to the magnanimity of a declaration of affection entertained in the teeth of the well-known sentiments of one's own brethren ; it is not easy to go beyond it in fervor and enthusiasm. We may not wonder that Col. Ingersoll should in *his* opening paragraph declare that his reverend competitor's letter "is manly, candid and generous." Nor that in order to point his pleasant bit of courteous commendation by contrasting the Rev. Doctor's style with that of other men of his cloth, he should inform him that "it is not often that a minister of the gospel of universal benevolence speaks of an unbeliever except in terms of reproach, contempt and hatred." In other words, Dr. Field is far better than the rest of his people, a fact accounted for by the assurance that "the meek are often malicious."

Thus far, the disputants are in accord, at least, upon the form in which their discussion is to be conducted : the learned and reverend teacher of the Gospel is ready to cross swords on equal terms with the brilliant rhetorician who boldly speaks out his

scorn against all that Christian men deem of the highest moment, here and hereafter. And thereupon comes Mr. Gladstone into the arena. He is not to be outdone by his predecessors in their gracious and gentle speeches, but with the characteristic caution which betrays the training and experience of a diplomat, he qualifies his testimonial by averring that it is based, not upon knowledge, but "information and belief."

"I have not the personal knowledge which assisted these doughty champions in making reciprocal acknowledgments as broad as could be desired, with reference to personal character and motive. Such acknowledgments are of high value in keeping the issue clear, if not always of all adventitious, yet of all venomous matter."

Whether or not there was a bit of grim humor concealed beneath this disclaimer of any personal knowledge as to the merits of the "doughty champions," others may, if so inclined, examine and decide. Lastly, keeping up this lofty train of chivalrous courtesy, Colonel Ingersoll assures Mr. Gladstone that it gives him pleasure to say that for his intellect and character he has the greatest respect.

If, then, a discussion of this kind, starting with these evidences of mutual good feeling and forbearance, was ever likely to produce good fruit when conducted by disputants of acknowledged ability, we would expect to find in the voluminous exchange of opinions before us a conspicuous example of the usefulness of such a debate. Yet I cannot escape the conviction, sympathizing as I most earnestly do with the sentiments of Mr. Gladstone and Dr. Field, that it would have been well for their cause if they had confined themselves to those assurances of high regard and distinguished consideration for the person of their adversary, leaving him the master of an undisputed field.

This language may seem bold to the verge of presumption; *a priori*, it is scarcely possible that such experienced masters of intellectual athletics should have written so many pages without some good result. It seems impossible that after studying the subject from his earliest youth with the ardor of an apostle, the zeal of a missionary, and the genius which he possesses to so conspicuous a degree, Mr. Gladstone should not, when defending a cause which appeals to the sympathy and love of the majority of civilized mankind, have left an impression in impartial minds that he had succeeded in at least neutralizing the efforts of his antago-

nist. But I do not hesitate to say that, although Mr. Gladstone has demonstrated his ability as a controversialist, his learning as a scholar and his skill as a debater, it was a foregone conclusion that in a contest with Colonel Ingersoll upon the vital subjects of Christian revelation, he must inevitably suffer defeat. It is not enough to say that his cause was good and his talents abundantly equal to the occasion ; the difficulty lies in the fact that he entered the arena shorn of his best advantages and exposed to receive blows which the very nature of the controversy forbade him to return with effect.

A discussion upon any grave subject of religion, philosophy, ethics, or the like, presupposes adversaries using the same weapons, bound by the same rules, subject to the same requirements, and starting from some common postulate. The case is far different where, as in this instance, one of the champions is handicapped by his earnestness in the cause which he has espoused, and the reverence which he may not discard when he approaches the subject under controversy. If Mr. Gladstone and Dr. Newman, for instance, should undertake to discuss these weighty questions, they would both enter upon an interchange of views with the same emotions of respect, the same decorum of speech, and a common acceptance of the great truths of their common faith. A debate between such men must necessarily bring out the best that is in them, because starting from the same premises, and bringing to bear the wealth, the vigor and accumulated resources of their intellects, joined with rare eloquence of style, their contributions to the religious literature of the day would certainly be interesting and effective. Neither of them would appeal to popular passion or prejudice ; neither of them would descend from the lofty plane of dignified controversy to purchase a victory which would lose its charms if obtained by mere declamation, sophistry or irreverent assumption of unproved facts.

There is to me something almost pathetic in Mr. Gladstone's implied recognition of the fact that the discussion in which he was about to engage could not be conducted with advantage to the cause which he had at heart. He complains in tones of aggrieved surprise that Col. Ingersoll does not conform to *his* rules of controversial discussion, but rather insists upon following his own. Not only is he aggrieved because "in this case all attempt

at continuous argument appears to be deliberately abjured" but he laments the fact that the paper which he undertakes to answer leaves on his mind "the impression of a battle-field where every man strikes at every man, and all is noise, hurry, and confusion." He strenuously objects to the "tumultuous" method in which the Reply conducts, "not indeed its argument, but its case." All of which seems very illogical. Col. Ingersoll used no false pretences to decoy Mr. Gladstone into the field. He did not claim to be any other than he was. A fair sample of his style and reasoning was before Mr. Gladstone when he undertook to defend great and solemn truths against the "tumultuous methods" which, whatever be their merit or demerit, belong peculiarly to Col. Ingersoll.

The remarks of Mr. Gladstone show very plainly the confusion into which an experienced debater and acute logician may be thrown by endeavoring to adapt himself to circumstances which he cannot consistently turn to advantage. The tone of his paper is, I need not say, marked by a grace and thoughtful decorum which is due as well to the subject under discussion as to the character of the writer. He shrinks from levity upon sacred themes as a child from physical pain. The irreverent use of the Creator's name, scoffing allusions to His works, jests and sneers in connection with the great problems of eternal life, wound him as though they were barbed with steel. He cannot overlook an expression which does not accord with his own exalted view of the matter under investigation. Thus, at the outset of his argument he pauses to rebuke his antagonist for venturing to ask Dr. Field, "What do you think of Jehovah himself?" This inquiry probably seemed entirely proper to the propounder, and it must be admitted even by those who deprecate that style of discussion that the expression was no more calculated to shock the moral sense of Dr. Field than a hundred others equally objectionable to those who are sensitive on those topics. But hear Mr. Gladstone's reprimand :

"I will briefly ask whether this is the tone in which controversy ought to be carried on? Not only is the name of Jehovah encircled in the heart of every believer with the profoundest reverence and love, but the Christian religion teaches through the Incarnation a doctrine of personal union with God, so lofty that it can only be approached in a deep reverential calm. I do not deny that a person who deems a given religion to be wicked may be led onward by logical consistency to impugn in strong terms the character of the Author and Object of that religion. But he is surely bound by the *laws of social morality and decency* to consider well the terms and the manner of his indictment. (P. 484).

When we have before us the fact that this violation of the "laws of social morality and decency" had been committed and was well known to Mr. Gladstone before he took up his pen, as were also the "tumultuous methods" and contempt for "anything like continuous argument" (p. 484) of which he now complains, is it disrespectful to ask why that eminent champion of the Christian religion entered upon a contest wherein he must have known that the same objectionable features would be repeated and probably reproduced in an aggravated form? Colonel Ingersoll certainly made no promise and entered into no pledge that he would respect Mr. Gladstone's theories or be guided by his rules. He presented himself in his own person, with his known peculiarities of warfare, with his avowed disregard for the opinion of decorous Christian disputants. His raillery, his scorn, his ridicule, his humor, have never bowed in homage before Christian revelation, never quailed before the most solemn theme, never suffered bit or bridle to restrain them before any antagonist.

The consciousness of this fatal cause of embarrassment obviously affects Mr. Gladstone's "Remarks." He knows, feels and shows throughout that he cannot reconcile himself to the office of a mere advocate. He cannot admit and recognize that the ordinary rules of reason are appropriate and reliable guides, for he knows that human reason looks on helpless and silent when it contemplates the Infinite, the Eternal, the Unknown; that its boldest projects and most ambitious efforts can no more solve the problems beyond the grave than an acrobat can hope to leap into Mars or a human hand seize and arrest the whirlwind. That reason, experience and a calm judicial temper may assist in solving difficulties which faith presents; that the divine scheme may, by the aid of faith and reason combined, be made clear to the minds of men, neither he nor any of those who think with him have ever doubted, but the initial obstacle in his way consists in this very requirement that Faith should play a part, and an important one, in the demonstration of revealed truth. This proposition his adversary openly derides; it is the very basis of his argument, or (to use Mr. Gladstone's distinction) of his case. If he *believed*, he would be shorn of his strength as effectually as was Samson after Delilah's shears had removed his flowing hair. The readers of the REVIEW would never have sought to read Col. Ingersoll's

attacks upon the Bible had he conceded that a resort to faith, and an acceptance of unseen and undemonstrated fact was a respectable feature in an argument on any subject. To ask of that gentleman that he shall stay his hand because faith bids him pause is simply to invite him to abstinence and silence. Of course, this obviously difficult situation Mr. Gladstone realizes, but instead of frankly avowing its existence as an insuperable bar to profitable discussion with Col. Ingersoll, he endeavors, with very doubtful success, to mitigate and evade it. Thus he says (p. 495) that

"The upholders of belief or of revelation from Claudian down to Cardinal Newman (see the very remarkable passage of the *Apologia pro vi. d. uâ.* pp. 376-78), cannot and do not seek to deny that the methods of divine government, as they are exhibited by experience, present to us many and varied moral problems, *insoluble by our understanding.* Their existence may not, and should not be dissimuled. But neither should they be exaggerated."

Certainly they should not be exaggerated, because exaggeration is the attribution of excessive value or importance to any factor in the consideration of any problem, and is, therefore, to be deprecated. But the fact that from Claudian to Newman all upholders of revelation (including, of course, Mr. Gladstone) have agreed in holding that the understanding of men could not solve these problems, is of the highest significance. It is the brazen wall between the school of which Colonel Ingersoll is now the most brilliant and active advocate, and the class which Mr. Gladstone represents and defends. The knowledge of this fact, his familiarity with the thoughts of the upholders of faith from Claudian to his own great contemporary, Dr. Newman, as well as his own fixed convictions, might well have taught Mr. Gladstone that he might expect no victory in the discussion of moral problems which were insoluble without the aid of an ally whose right to be heard was not admitted by his adversary.

True, the author of the Remarks attempts to justify his conclusions on the grounds of reason and common sense.

"In one sense, without doubt these difficulties are matter for our legitimate and necessary cognizance, and it is our duty to decide for ourselves by the use of the faculty given us the great questions of natural and revealed religion. They are to be decided according to the evidence, and if we cannot trim the evidence into a consistent whole, then according to the balance of evidence."

This general proposition Colonel Ingersoll would, no doubt, admit to be true. No one, so far as I am informed, among the

Rationalists or Agnostics denies or has denied that every man who undertakes to form an opinion or to pronounce a judgment or to participate in a debate on a given topic, should examine into the evidence. That is, on the contrary, what they strenuously insist upon, with the addition that upon this evidence *alone* the judgment shall be pronounced. But surely Mr. Gladstone does not mean to be thus understood. If such was his meaning, he and his antagonist differ in this only, that the one has been convinced and the other has not been convinced by evidence which both have studied, and which, although the same in both cases, has produced opposite results. I venture to say that such was not the meaning of the writer, and that in his anxiety to meet his adversary on equal terms, he has thrown aside his armor and blunted his sword.

Where, then, is faith, and what part does it play in the discussion or acceptance of Divine Truth and the solution of these "insoluble problems"? The sacred volume from which he draws inspiration and strength tells him in no uncertain words that faith is the evidence of things *unseen*; that we must accept these things as little children; that they are happy who have not asked *to see*, but have *believed*. The danger of conceding that faith may be eliminated to make room for common sense (whatever that may mean in connection with supernatural subjects) is too apparent to require more elaboration.

But the pleasure which Colonel Ingersoll derives from the concession is most frankly and joyously manifested. He fairly exults at Mr. Gladstone's admission. He tells him that he has finally left the City of Refuge to which the theologian flies, that he has abandoned the breastwork behind which the theologian kneels, and the rifle-pit into which the theologian crawls. He quotes his adversary's disclaimer of the right to set up any rule of investigation except such as common sense teaches us to use in the ordinary conduct of life, and then rapturously declares that "this is certainly a morning star," by which he no doubt means that Mr. Gladstone has abandoned his case and surrendered at his adversary's discretion. The peculiar way in which he takes advantage of this generous surrender is manifested in his commentaries upon the story of Abraham and his son Isaac, and the history of Ananias and Sapphira, winding up as to the latter with a declaration that, *of course*, he feels sure that the thing never occurred, the

probability being that Ananias never lived and never died. "It is probably a story invented by the early church to make the collection of subscriptions somewhat easier."

Shall it then be said that no weighty question of Religion, Faith, and Revelation shall be the theme of discussion, or ever be debated between eminent men of different views? Far from it. Even those subjects that are beyond the ken and apprehension of men may be fairly examined and weighed and decorously submitted to analysis. Mr. Gladstone might well have accepted a challenge from or sent a challenge to Mr. Huxley, but he would have known in advance that his deepest convictions would be respected and his reverence for sacred themes not be shocked. But under the circumstances he appears to have acted very much as would an astronomer, who, engaging in discussion with a blind antagonist as to the existence of a planet, throws aside his telescope, or as an athlete, who, before starting upon a race, consents to have shackles placed upon his limbs because his competitor is lame.

There are subjects, however, upon which Mr. Gladstone might have spoken with great advantage to his hearers, subjects that were merely suggested in the discussion. The question of marriage comes up incidentally, and is disposed of with great brevity. Mr. Gladstone, as we might well suppose, upholds the great dignity of that institution by saying that Christ taught the absolute indissolubility of marriage. Colonel Ingersoll scouts the idea of indissolubility with even more than his usual vehemence and his usual rhetoric. "Why should a husband and wife be compelled to live with each other after love is dead?" And he follows this inquiry by others of the same general character, intended to prove that when love is dead, when the husband is cruel or infamous or an outcast, the bond should be severed and a new field of matrimonial ventures opened to the actors in the original failure. It is hardly possible that the writer was not carried away by the facility of his pen or blinded by the brilliancy of his own rhetoric. He certainly cannot have intended to say that the permanency of this contract, "the most sacred that human beings can make" (p. 626), is to depend solely upon caprice or upon the strength of the man's or the woman's love. It is too plain for argument that this simply resolves itself into the abolition of the marriage relation and the substitution of temporary unions which will last so long as the convenience of both parties or either of them may suggest.

The experiment of divorce made easy is not a new one. Juvenal speaks of a lady who had married eight husbands in the course of five years. Martial mentions a matron who had taken ten husbands in one month. This may be a poetical exaggeration, and I do not present Martial as absolutely reliable on a question of statistics. Saint Jerome, however, is not a poet, and is an honest witness. He speaks of a husband who had been widowed twenty times; the twenty-first lady whom he selected as his companion had had twenty-two husbands. Conceding our modern society to be less frivolous and anxious for variety, I still think that when divorces are granted because love on the wife's side has gone, or the husband's affection weakened, the divorce courts will be kept immeasurably busy.

But then what becomes of woman's dignity if the sanctity of this tie is gone? The ancient church raised marriage to the dignity of a sacrament and attached to it a solemnity and importance that no other contract possesses. To the permanency of marriage, to the influence of the Christian religion in sanctifying the union of one man and one woman under the sanction of the Creator and Father of the human family, woman owes more than to any other cause the exalted station which she holds in our modern society. If it should ever happen that the efforts of the new school of Anti-Christian writers shall succeed, she first of all must feel the incalculable loss. Her title to queenly rank dates back to the time when that declaration was made in Judea. Her claim has since been consecrated by the blood of her martyrs who bravely died for the faith which placed a crown upon her brow. How could or can the Christian church do otherwise than honor and hold up for example the noble women who confessed their belief in the amphitheatre and public places, maimed by wild beasts and brutal men. Even Renan's cold skepticism warms into a glow of enthusiasm when he describes the brave and gentle little slave Faustina as she smilingly accepted cruelty and outrage that may not be described, declaring all the while that she was a Christian and that Christians could do no harm. And she was but one of an army that ennobled, purified and made sacred the whole family of Christian women.

What an answer to the sneers and scoffs of which we have so brilliant a sample before us Mr. Gladstone might have made if he had not been misled into so fruitless a line of debate. Whether

the stories of Jephthah and Jonah are literally true, whether or not they are to be taken in this sense or in that, is not the question of great and vital moment. It is easy to make witty comments upon these narratives, but no man will cease to be a believer because he fails to understand and is unable to explain why God commanded the dreadful sacrifice of Abraham, or whether Ananias and Sapphira deserved death for their lie.

The men of to-day need to learn what Christianity has done and is doing for the human race. They must be asked to refrain for a moment from laughing at the bright sallies of brilliant declaimers and to inquire into the possible results of a successful campaign against the system of belief that has been interwoven with the growth, strength and progress of the world for the last eighteen hundred years.

None more wisely and eloquently than Mr. Gladstone could have warned society of the dangers and evils which a reckless eagerness for untried systems and an impatient sufferance of whatever *is*, may produce. For the first time in the history of our modern life, the law looks on in silence and leaves men's tongues and pens free to malign and caricature the religion which was and still is part of the law of the land. The fear of punishment being removed, nothing is left but the self-imposed restraint of him who decries sacred things to fix the measure and violence of his attacks. Whether Dr. Field and Mr. Gladstone may or may not outshine Colonel Ingersoll in debate, is not, after all, so important. The question remains whether the Lord's Prayer may be abolished and the Sermon on the Mount derided into general contempt, without changing the whole structure of our moral and social world. Colonel Ingersoll utters many noble sentiments in eloquent speech, but it is no disrespect to say that he did not first discover them. If I mistake not, every one of them comes down in a straight line of descent from that Magna Charta of human fraternity, the prayer which first taught that men were brothers and that forgiveness of offenses was a virtue. He will hardly admit this, however, for it also teaches that one Name should be hallowed above all others and that a Divine Will rules the world.

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